

# ***WORKING LANDS***

## ***CONNECTION***

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection  
Ben Brancel, Secretary

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### **2012 Agricultural Enterprise Area Designations**

Five new Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) have been designated, and two existing ones expanded as a part of the 2012 Agricultural Enterprise Area petition cycle. The seven petitions were reviewed by the 2012 AEA evaluation team and designated by an order signed by the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Designations go into effect on January 1, 2013.

The new areas total about 171,600 acres in seven counties and 28 towns, with 330 landowners petitioning for the designation. Wisconsin now has 22 AEAs statewide, totaling almost 510,000 acres in 17 counties and 55 towns. Nearly 750 landowners have signed petitions seeking the designations.

Agricultural enterprise areas are part of Wisconsin's farmland preservation program. They are intended to encourage the preservation of agricultural land use and to promote agricultural economic development appropriate to the region. Landowners in AEAs are not subject to any new land use regulations. Farmers owning land within an AEA can receive tax credits in exchange for signing an agreement to keep their land in agricultural use for at least 15 years.

The new and expanded AEAs are:

**Antigo Flats AEA, Langlade and Marathon counties.** This expands an existing AEA, adding 11,886 acres and bringing the total to 74,164 acres in the towns of Ackley, Antigo, Neva, Peck, Polar, Price, Rolling, Vilas and Harrison. Goals include developing local and regional markets for certified potato and small grain seed, dairy products, wood technology and other local commodities. Petitioners also want to provide technical and educational assistance to agribusinesses, develop agri-tourism, and help farmers protect natural resources.

**Elba-Portland AEA, Dodge County.** This new AEA covers 38,580 acres in the towns of Elba and Portland. In this cash cropping and dairy region, the petitioners' goals are to maintain a strong agricultural community that will keep agribusinesses and attract new ones, and encourage new investment in farming operations.

continued...

For more information on Wisconsin's Working Lands Initiative:

Website: <http://workinglands.wi.gov>

E-mail: [DATCPWorkingLands@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPWorkingLands@Wisconsin.gov)

## 2012 AEA Designations, continued...

**Halfway Creek Prairie AEA, La Crosse County.** This is also new, encompassing 1,647 acres in the towns of Onalaska and Holland. Cash-cropping and dairy and swine operations dominate agriculture in this region. Along with protecting existing farmland, AEA goals include fostering bio-energy production, preserving land and water resources, and maintaining existing agricultural markets and suppliers.

**Heart of America's Dairyland AEA, Clark and Marathon counties.** This expands an existing AEA by 36,999 acres, bringing the covered area to 97,984 acres in the towns of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Brighton and Hull. The AEA petitioners want to preserve the region's agricultural heritage, assure production capacity, and provide tools to minimize the conversion of farmland to non-farm uses. They also aim to develop markets for local products.

**Pecatonica AEA, Lafayette County.** Parts of the towns of Argyle, Blanchard and Lamont are included in this new 45,776-acre AEA. Petitioners here want to reduce barriers to new farming businesses, encourage multi-generational farming, and attract cottage agricultural industries. They also want to provide training for local workers in bio-products and food industries, and explore the potential for growth of technologies for energy efficiency and renewable energy on farms and in rural areas.

**Shields-Emmet AEA, Dodge County.** 16,051 acres are included in this new AEA, covering portions of the two townships. Petitioners in the AEA seek to encourage farmland preservation agreements and soil and water conservation plans as a means to improve farm operations and support their rural identity. They also encourage non-traditional farming practices and investments in modernized farm equipment.

**Vienna-Dane-Westport AEA, Dane County.** This new AEA consists of 20,681 acres in the three townships. Goals include maintaining strong agricultural land use through the use of land use tools that limit encroachment of nonfarm development by creating incentives for farmers to sign farmland preservation agreements. Petitioners also wish to expand opportunities for new markets and new uses for agricultural products and by-products.

Contact Coreen Fallat with  
AEA questions at  
[Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov) or  
(608) 224-4625.

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

# of AEAs:	22 areas
# of acres:	510,000 acres (approx.)
# of counties:	17 counties
# of towns:	55 towns
# of petitioners:	750 petitioners
# of petition cycles:	3

*Last updated July 2012.*

Interested in learning more about the state's designated AEAs?

Access our interactive webmap and petition documents from our website:

[http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working\\_Lands\\_Initiative/AEA/Designated\\_Agricultural\\_Enterprise\\_Areas/index.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working_Lands_Initiative/AEA/Designated_Agricultural_Enterprise_Areas/index.aspx)

## **Interested in Seeking AEA Designation? Watch for the 2013 AEA Request for Petitions!**

The department anticipates releasing the 2013 request for agricultural enterprise area petitions early in the fall of 2012. When announced, the petition materials will be available on our website at: [http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working\\_Lands\\_Initiative/AEA/Petition\\_Materials/index.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working_Lands_Initiative/AEA/Petition_Materials/index.aspx).

If you think your community is interested, now is a good time to start a conversation about how a proposed AEA in your community can encourage agricultural development and help to target local agricultural preservation through farmland preservation agreements and other land use tools. Our website has information to help guide this discussion, including petition text submitted by successful AEAs.

The department also plans to host one or two free workshops this winter to meet with prospective petitioners and provide guidance on petition development. Contact Coreen Fallat at [Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Coreen.Fallat@wisconsin.gov); (608) 224-4625 or Lisa Schultz at [Lisaj.schultz@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Lisaj.schultz@wisconsin.gov); 608-224-4604 to indicate your intent to submit a petition and to receive notification of the workshop(s) when scheduled.

## **PACE Evaluation Report Now Available**

On June 26th, 2011, Wisconsin Act 32 was passed by the Wisconsin state legislature, which required the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to evaluate the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program. The evaluation report was required to include an evaluation of administration of the program, sources of funding, state participation, and requirements for a local match. 2011 Act 32 further required DATCP to include options for a replacement program that would be less costly and more efficient for preserving farmland.

DATCP was required to report their findings to the Joint Committee on Finance and the standing committees responsible for agricultural matters in each house of the Legislature by June 30, 2012. DATCP completed the report, provided it to the required committees and also made the report available on its website. The full report can be viewed here: <http://datcp.wi.gov/uploads/Environment/pdf/PACEReportJune2012.pdf>

The PACE evaluation report was developed using feedback from participating cooperating entities and landowners, as well as outside stakeholders that have expertise or interest in agricultural conservation easements. The report provides an evaluation of the entire program including the application process, preliminary approval of projects, contracting with cooperating entities, finalizing agreements, reimbursement, and special circumstances. The report also includes recommendations regarding sources of funding and the state's financial participation in easement purchases. Questions or comments regarding the report can be directed to Lisa Schultz at [LisaJ.Schultz@wisconsin.gov](mailto:LisaJ.Schultz@wisconsin.gov).

## **PACE Projects Update**

The department continues to make progress towards the purchase of agricultural conservation easements on fifteen farms in Wisconsin. These farms were selected through a review completed by the department and the state's PACE Advisory Council in 2010.

To date, twelve of the 15 projects are completed, covering approximately 4,700 acres of farmland. The remaining three projects will be completed throughout 2012. Overall, it is anticipated that approximately 5,600 acres will be permanently protected for future agricultural use as a result of the PACE program.



## Farmland Preservation Planning and Zoning Update

July 2012 marked the three year anniversary of the passage of the Working Lands Initiative into state law. A number of counties, towns, and other municipalities have worked within their communities to revise farmland preservation plans and farmland preservation zoning ordinances. The following local governments have recently completed the department's certification review under the Working Lands Initiative standards:

Farmland Preservation Planning: Jefferson County, Outagamie County, La Crosse County, Winnebago County

Farmland Preservation Zoning: Jefferson County, Dodge County, Lafayette County, Town of Theresa, (Dodge County) Town of Herman (Dodge County)

Local governments currently updating plans and ordinances are encouraged to submit preliminary materials to DATCP for an informal review. Preliminary review by DATCP staff will provide local governments additional information regarding certification requirements, processes, and timelines and help ensure a smooth and timely certification.

For questions about farmland preservation certifications, contact Alison Volk at:

[Alison.Volk@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Alison.Volk@Wisconsin.gov).

## Staff Announcements

**Sara Walling** recently rejoined the Department's Bureau of Land and Water Resources as Section Chief of the Resource Planning and Water Quality Section. Most recently Sara worked in the DATCP Office of the Secretary as a Budget and Policy Analyst, where she was responsible for providing analysis on bioenergy, climate change, and environmental policy of significance to the department, as well as providing staffing support to the state's Bioenergy Council. Prior to her work in the Office of the Secretary, Sara spent four years in the Resource Planning and Water Quality Section as a Water Quality and Nutrient Management Specialist and managed the innovative statewide Manure Management Advisory System. Prior to joining DATCP, Sara served for three years with the USDA as a Water Quality Program Supervisor at the National Soil Erosion Research lab in West Lafayette, Indiana, managing many aspects of the federal Source Water Protection Initiative to identify conservation planning needs in environmentally impacted water systems and conducting research to evaluate the success of conservation practices. Welcome back to the bureau, Sara!

**Michael Hutchinson** joined the Bureau of Land and Water Resources as a Contract Specialist in late May. Michael previously worked at the Department of Employee Trust funds where he first started working with the state. Michael's new responsibilities include working with Soil and Water Resource Management grants Welcome to the team, Michael!

### Requests for Information or Speakers

If you would like to request a speaker to present information in your area on these subjects, please contact us at [DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov).

